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[P. 690]

The Jarawa of the Andaman Islands

By S. S. SARKAR (Calcutta)

Introduction

[10] The Jarawa of the Andaman Islands are confined along the western
[13] coast of South Andaman, where their movements are restricted - roughly speaking - between Port Anson on the north and Constance Bay on the south (fig. 1). They are also reported from the southwestern part of the island of Baratang - an island completely separated from South and Middle Andaman. The latter group must, therefore, use some kind of watercraft to cross over from one island to the other. The extreme northern tip of the South Andaman Island was until recently used by the Jarawa for crossing over to Middle Andaman through the two intervening Islands of Spike and Bluff with the help of bamboo rafts (SARKAR, 1954). This route has now been checked owing to the establishment of a police picket on Bluff Island.

[50] The Jarawa also appear to have used some sort of watercraft to migrate
[10] into North Sentinel Island in the distant past. Their craft may have been
[13] similar to the outrigger canoes described by BONIG (1912) on the occasion of
[50] his visit to this island. The distance from Port Moutat to North Sentinel is about 24 miles and although BONIG says that "the boats are not very seaworthy" this distance must at one time have been crossed by the ancestors of the present-day inhabitants of North Sentinel Island. BONNINGTON (1932) used the term Sentinelese for them, while LOWIS (1912, 1923) preferred to call them Jarawa. It appears from what little is known about them that they are more akin to the Jarawa of South Andaman than to the other Negrito groups. No canoes are reported from among the Jarawa of South Andaman; it appears that the bamboo raft is enough for their transport on water. The Jarawa outrigger canoes of North Sentinel Island, which BONIG mentions as somewhat different from those of the Onge or the Andamanese, indicate a somewhat higher cultural status of the former as compared with the groups living on South Andaman.

[184]

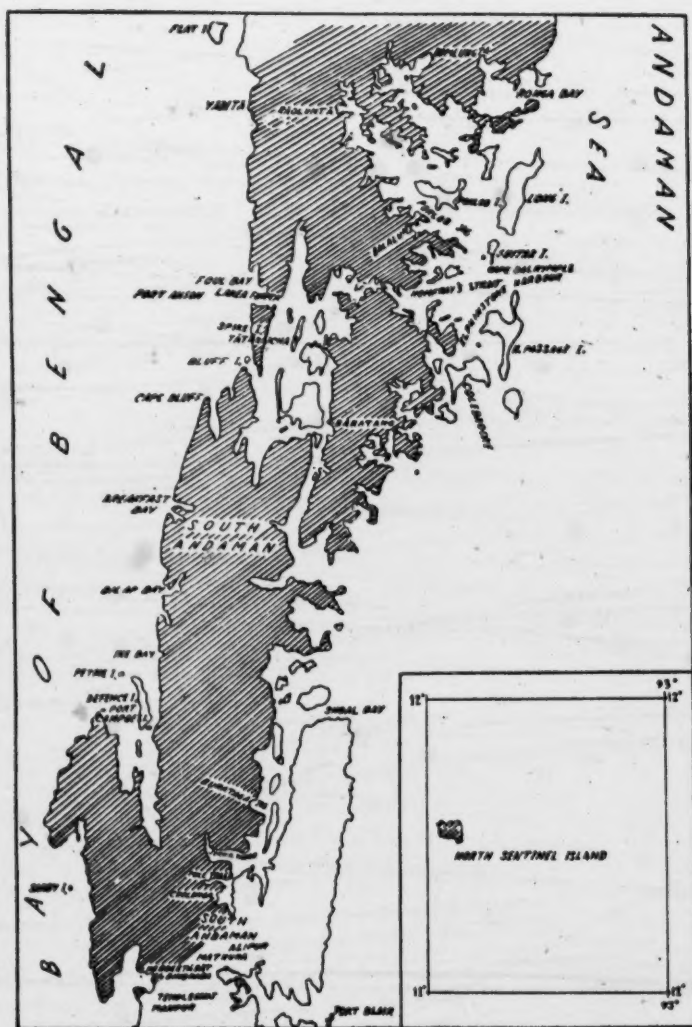


Fig. 1

The North Sentinel Jarawa

648 The taming of the South Andaman Jarawa has been a moot problem of
175 the local government in view of their occasional raids on the forest camps and
offices. On this score the North Sentinel Jarawa appear to have an important
function. Nothing is known of the length of their isolation on this little island
of about 15 square miles but it is probably unaffected by the punitive expedi-
tions, that are undertaken from time to time by the local government against
the South Andaman Jarawa. When BONIG and his party landed on the west
coast of North Sentinel Island on March 9th 1911, they were not received with
volleys of arrows, but instead the "eight men on the beach and another five
in two canoes" disappeared in the jungle. The same was true of those seen
[342] previously on the east coast. BONIG and his party visited some huts, which
were of the lean-to type, and also went some miles inland without being
troubled. BONIG therefore rightly concludes the following:

"The people appear very timid and it seems not unlikely that if they
are approached frequently with presents, they will become friendly of their
own accord. If this fails the small area of the island and the open nature of the
forest would also make it easy to capture some, and after kind treatment let
them go again".

000 As far as the present writer's knowledge goes this method has not yet
been tried, but its utility lies perhaps in taming their South Andaman con-
geners. They could be made to settle round Port Campbell and other suitable
areas on the west coast. A few communal huts built according to the plan and
style of the South Andaman Jarawa should first of all be provided. They
should be given all chances of expanding their population. Such an opportunity
they are likely to seize if they suffer in any way from population pressure or
from shortage of food and shelter. If their canoes are not seaworthy they
should be provided with suitable water transport so that there may be fre-
quent intercourse between the two islands.

The South Andaman Jarawa

114 Although no systematic ethnographic studies on the Jarawa have been
undertaken, RADCLIFFE BROWN (1922) gave sufficient hints regarding the
unity of the material culture of the Negritos as a whole. Physically they belong
to the Negrito race, as can be seen from the few natives captured from time
to time by the local government (SARKAR, 1952). The punitive expeditions
648 have also brought to light some important facts of their material culture.
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Thus, during the punitive expedition of March 1911 (Lowis, 1912)
near Pap-lunta-jig a big communal hut was found which had been erected on
the ridge of a hill and which measured 45' x 30' x 15'. It was raised high
above the ground and was supported by a number of stout piles. The structure
[184] was different from the Onge communal huts in that the floor was raised,
while in the latter the floor is just the surface of the earth. The eaves of the
Onge communal hut touch the ground.

Another item of material culture found during the above expedition was a few unbaked pots which show that the Jarawa manufacture earthenware articles - an art not reported so far from among the Onge. Coiled pottery was known among the Andamanese (MAN, 1932). It can be found in the Andamanese kitchen middens as well.

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The present writer had the opportunity of being twice after the trail of the South Andaman Jarawa in the year 1948. During these two tours a large number of ethnographic objects of the Jarawa was collected. They are now deposited at the office of the Anthropological Survey of India¹, Indian Museum, Calcutta.

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It was known that the Jarawa were using Bluff and Spike Islands as temporary halting stations in their to-and-fro migrations from South Andaman to Middle Andaman. In September 1938, a pregnant Jarawa woman and four young children (SARKAR, 1952) were captured while they were crossing on a raft on the coast off Bluff Island. A few of their haunts were known to the then officers of the local forest department.

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In 1948 while the present writer was camping at Long Island, studying the Andamanese, two such opportunities of visiting the Jarawa areas arose. The presence of the Jarawa north of Port Anson was reported to us. We left for Port Anson in a motor launch on March 7th 1948, in the company of an Andamanese - whose canoe was tied behind our launch - under the leadership, of Mr. Joseph, the then Sub-divisional Officer of the forest department. We had one gun only and a *dao* (billhook) each.

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We passed through Homfray Strait and, reaching Port Anson, we went along the western coast of Middle Andaman. We then anchored our vessel off Foul Bay and came ashore in the Andamanese canoe. This flat open coast is known to be a good place for deer hunting and the animals could be seen from the sea. When the deer were not seen from the canoe we presumed that some human beings had been there shortly before; we suspected them to be Jarawa. Soon we discovered on the beach small footprints, which both Mr. JOSEPH and the Andamanese recognized as Jarawa ones. We traced them inside the jungle and came across a small fire which was still smouldering. A few yards away we found two bags for carrying water made of leaves (fig. 2) which were still wet. The few drops therein tasted sweet. We walked about for some time since the footprints could no longer be traced. There seemed to have been only two people. We then came to Bluff Island along the east coast of Spike Island but found nothing of the Jarawa.

[415]



Fig. 2

[415]

¹ Thanks are due to its Director, Professor NIRMAL KUMAR BOSE for his kindness in helping the writer with the illustrations of this paper.

[23]

The second trip was made on March 12th 1948. Our party included Mr. JOSEPH and Mr. POOVIAH², both Sub-divisional Officers of the forest department, one Burman bush police and four Andamanese with their two canoes tied behind our motor boat. We followed the same route from Long Island and, reaching Spike Island, we anchored at its northeastern corner. We came ashore in the canoes. The beach was small and rocky. Part of it was sheltered on one side by huge rocks behind which the Jarawa were known to waylay those approaching from the sea. So we landed very cautiously. Just at the outskirts of the jungle we saw huge bundles of short bamboo lengths tied to one another and piled up in a heap. It was a Jarawa raft. Near the bamboo pile were three crude paddles split from the spadix of the palm called *Nipa fruticans*. We were all the more careful in our approach.

[501]
[824]

[361]

Soon we came upon a clearing in the jungle. There was no Jarawa, but all around we saw traces of a temporary halt of a large party. We counted nineteen fireplaces. At a distance from the fireplaces we saw a small temporary hut improvised out of the materials available on the spot. Two small shrubs were tied together on two sides to form the roof of the hut. The Andamanese identified it to have been made for the Jarawa chief and his wife. Household objects

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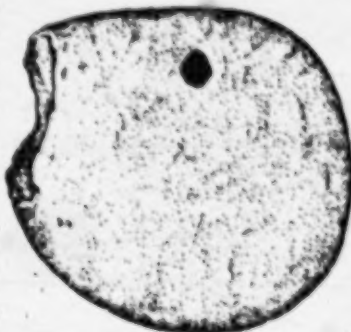


Fig. 3

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1934, fig. 211). At one corner of a fireplace the shavings of an arrowshaft or a bow were seen and nearby was a flat round pebble, one end of which was broken like that of a scraper (fig. 3). This scraper showed marks of red ochre on it. Beneath a tree a circular mat, sewn out of three pieces of long triangular palm-like leaves was spread out, while on its branches was found a beautiful specimen of an unstrung bow. It appeared to have been recently prepared and

² These two officers captured two Jarawa males, one adult and one boy, on October 19th 1948 on Spike Island. They were brought to Port Blair, wherefrom they managed to escape at night.

123 painted with red ochre. It was perhaps left there for drying. The Jarawa would
411 surely have returned just for this bow!

It was a straight piece of wood tapering at both ends. The outer surface was convex and was painted red, while the inner one was straight and smooth, and showed criss-cross designs and indentations. We then went to look for a spring and found it at some distance behind a steep rock but there was no water then. It appeared that the Jarawa had left this camp some time ago.

We then left Spike Island and sailed for Yeratia Jig. Here an old kitchen midden was known to be another Jarawa haunt. No Jarawa was found even there, however. The kitchen midden was a mound strewn all over with animal bones. Fragments of typical Andamanese pottery and a blue stone bead were discovered there.

In recent years the Jarawa raids have been rather more frequent. GUPTA (1955) has given a list of them in his report on these people. It is believed that the primary cause of the restlessness of the Jarawa is the shortage of game and other food material². On the other hand the tribe appears to have been sufficiently provoked by the punitive expeditions. All the Jarawa villages that the punitive party came upon were burnt down. In the encounter of March 1911 a woman was captured alive and nobody knows what happened to her afterwards. The pregnant woman captured along with four children in 1938 off Bluff Island later on gave birth to a boy (SARKAR, 1952, Pl. IX, fig. 3) at Port Blair but it was difficult to tame her. After her delivery she attempted to swim away and was rescued from the sea. She would spend hours climbing a cocoanut tree. Her whereabouts were unknown during the Japanese occupation of the Andaman Islands during the last war. The young children were sent to the Mission at Car Nicobar, where the present writer studied them in 1948. One of them had died before.

On the other hand the Jarawa raids, according to the then executive Government officers, are also very brutal. Before they go out for a raid the Jarawa cover their chests with bark armour and paint their faces with patterns of white clay. The bark armour is stitched securely on the body by other persons and can only be removed by cutting off the stitches. These people are in the habit of mutilating their victims. They take out their brains, their eyes, and their bodies are hacked all over. - The type of arrow they use is almost a spear, as may be seen from fig. 4. This arrow was obtained by the present writer from the forest department officers of Long Island in 1951. It was used injuring a bush police officer of the night picket unit at Lakera Lunta in January of that year. The police, in return, shot one Jarawa dead. The male nurse of the Long Island Hospital took the following body measurements of this dead man:

Height ... 5 feet 1 inch
Chest ... 36 inches

Fig. 4

² They have of late been reported from about the region of Bomlungta, Rangat Bay, etc. on the east coast of Middle Andaman. (The spelling "Ronga Bay" on the map is incorrect.)



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Right arm ... 2 feet 4 inches
 Right index finger ... 4 inches
 Right toe ... 2 inches
 Length of right leg ... 2 feet 11 inches
 Length of right foot ... 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches

726 The iron blade of the arrowhead is 17 cm long and 4.9 cm broad at the base.
 411 It is mounted on a wooden shaft 86.7 cm long. The barb at the base consists
 177 of an ordinary iron nail which is bent at its sharp end and fixed with bark
 threads impregnated with resin. It must have been obtained from a forest
 camp during some raid.

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According to GUPTA (1955) the above mentioned incident was not a
 premeditated raid. He thinks - after a careful inquiry into the above incident -
 that the Jarawa "came out in the open, early in the morning and walked
 right into the camp and did not attempt to shoot, [which] would warrant a
 presumption that they meant a friendly visit".

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Since the last few years the Andaman Government has not encouraged
 any punitive expedition among the Jarawa. This is also evident from one of the
 Senior Officer's opinion quoted above. The forest workers, on the other hand,
 still have to face the Jarawa. They think that since no punitive action is taken
 against them they are gradually getting bolder. It is reported that the Jarawa
 beat the trunks of trees within their hearing. Consequently all these buttress
 beatings are immediately reported to the higher authorities and armed guards
 protecting the forest workers are alerted. If that is the case then the Jarawa
 do not attack without a warning! But who knows what they really mean?
 Do they want to communicate with us? Or is it a means of communication
 among themselves?

The Jarawa Problem

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It has already been hinted at the problem of taming the Jarawa. It was
 one of the special aims of the Government of India to arrange a substation
 of its Department of Anthropology. As a result of this the present writer
 visited the Andaman Islands twice and was of the opinion that the substation
 of the Department of Anthropology should be stationed at Long Island and
 not at Port Blair. There were no express plans but to carry out anthropological
 studies of the aborigines of the various islands. It has not yet been possible
 to census the friendly Onge properly (SARKAR, 1960).

The primary desideratum appears to be a knowledge of the native
 language. As far as the present writer knows, there is no one in the various
 Government departments who is acquainted with the Andamanese language,
 not to mention the other languages spoken on the various islands. The Onge

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* A Jarawa vocabulary was collected from the captive pregnant Jarawa woman
 by Mrs. CHENGAPPA and Mrs. CHAUDHURI, and it has been published by the Andaman
 Government.

language could have been learnt by now since they are friendly. There has not been any attempt to communicate with the Jarawa⁴ through the medium of the Onge language, which could be tried with the help of loudspeakers installed at suitable places in reply to the buttress beatings of the Jarawa. Prior to this an aerial survey of the Jarawa villages or camps would be necessary. Some food, clothing or other such articles might be air-dropped during this aerial survey. Along with the articles to be air-dropped some pictures showing symbols of friendship, such as the Andamanese and the Onge way of sitting upon one another's laps, might be included. Some pictures showing the Indian manner of greeting one another, for instance that of saluting each other with folded hands, might also be considered. [516]

The local government appears to be very much in favour of capturing the Jarawa alive and then letting them off with presents after kind treatment. Since the capture of the Jarawa from South Andaman is not an easy problem - as may be seen from the Census Reports of the last sixty years - we might try this method of approach with the Jarawa of North Sentinel Island, where such captures appear to be comparatively easier. 648

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